

Commas . . .

650.1 To Set Off Dialogue

Use commas to set off the exact words of a speaker from the rest of the sentence. (Also see page 618.)

The firefighter said, "When we cannot successfully put out a fire, we try to keep it from spreading."

"When we cannot successfully put out a fire, we try to keep it from spreading," the firefighter said.

NOTE Do not use a comma or quotation marks for indirect quotations. The words *if* and *that* often signal dialogue that is being reported rather than quoted.

The firefighter said that when they cannot successfully put out a fire, they try to keep it from spreading. (These are not the speaker's exact words.)

650.2 In Direct Address

Use commas to separate a noun of direct address from the rest of the sentence. (A noun of direct address is a noun that names a person spoken to in the sentence.)

Hanae, did you know that an interior decorator can change wallpaper and fabrics on a computer screen?

Sure, Jack, and an architect can use a computer to see how light will fall in different parts of a building.

650.3 To Set Off Interjections

Use commas to separate an interjection or a weak exclamation from the rest of the sentence.

No kidding, you mean that one teacher has to manage a class of 42 pupils? (weak exclamation)

Uh-huh, and that teacher has other classes that size. (interjection)

650.4 To Set Off Explanatory Phrases

Use commas to separate an explanatory phrase from the rest of the sentence.

English, the language computers speak worldwide, is also the most widely used language in science and medicine.

More than 750 million people, about an eighth of the world's population, speak English as a foreign language.

Practice

Commas 4

- To Set Off Dialogue
- In Direct Address
- To Set Off Interjections
- To Set Off Explanatory Phrases



For each of the following sentences, write the word or words that should be set off with a comma. Add the commas.

Example: Jenni let's go see a movie.

Jenni,

1. Hey do you want to go see a movie with us?
2. I answered "It depends on what movie."
3. Today's movies especially the computer-animated films are pretty amazing.
4. The earliest films lasting no more than 10 minutes were just brief looks at sports or fashions of the early 1900s.
5. Wow it cost a whole nickel to see one of those movies!
6. Did you know Curtis that movies were silent until 1927?
7. Music usually played on a piano often accompanied films, but they were still called "silent" movies.
8. In the first movie with sound, Al Jolson said "Wait a minute. You ain't heard nothin' yet!"

MECHANICS

Learning Language A noun of direct address does not always need to be a person's name. It could refer to a group of people and also requires a comma.

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to our show.

Work with a partner to think of other groups you might address. Write a few sentences, placing commas in the correct place.